

VZCZCXRO6346  
OO RUEHROV  
DE RUEHKH #0692/01 1271012  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 061012Z MAY 08 ZDK CTG NUMEROUS SERVICES  
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0735  
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000692

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/SPG, AF/SE WILLIAMSON, AF/C

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/04/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: URFF ARAB REBEL REPRESENTATIVES SEEK SUPPORT

REF: KHARTOUM 567

KHARTOUM 00000692 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)  
)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On May 4 in Khartoum, three representatives of the Arab-dominated United Revolutionary Forces Front (URFF) told poloffs that their individual rebel group and the larger umbrella group of which they are a part, the United Resistance Front (URF), are both weak and need support. The representatives from three different Arab tribes also stated that the majority of Darfur's Arabs support URFF, that the Zaghawa ex-JEM leader Bahar Idriss Abu Gharda seeks to dominate the URF, and that the URFF supports the SPLM and the CPA, despite having strong reservations about the ongoing census and the 2009 mid-term elections. URFF representatives stated that it has been months since they have been in contact with UNAMID's Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST), and said that they were not aware of JMST's plans for the coming months. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Three representatives of URFF from different Arab tribes met with poloffs at U.S. Embassy Khartoum on May 4 (see para 8 for names, tribal affiliation, positions, and contact information). URFF is one of five separate rebel movements that make up the URF, the others being: SLA-Field Command, the National Movement for Reform and Development (NMRD), SLA-Khamis Abdullah, and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)/Collective Leadership (reftel).

URFF'S LARGE MEMBERSHIP, ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNICATIONS  
STRATEGY WEBSITES

-----  
13. URFF representatives stated that over 70 percent of all of Darfur's Arabs support the URFF. They said that this is a very significant number, as they estimate that half of Darfur's population is Arab. Polchief questioned this number, given the large number of pro-government Arab janjanweed and unaligned southern Arab Rizegat. One leader responded that many Arabs have recently joined the URFF, as they continue to suffer from the conflict. "Our people have suffered from attacks by rebel groups and the government, and the examples of the SPLM and SLM-Minnawi have taught us that the only way to solve a problem and get something is to take up weapons," said the Head of URFF Internal Offices, Al-Bushari Musa Abaker. Abaker also attempted to differentiate between Arabs belonging to the URFF and those belonging to janjaweed and militia groups, saying that the latter originate from outside of Sudan (Arab nomads from Chad and Niger), and that they were bought off by the government. (Note: Notorious Janjaweed leader Musa Hilal hails from the Mahamid tribe, which migrates across Sahelian countries outside Sudan, and is often accused - inaccurately - by Arab groups opposed to him as being of "foreign" origin. End

note.) Abaker also stated that there are many secret UEFF members who work for the government.

14. (C) Abaker stated that URFF's membership base comes from the Arab nomads, and that there are URFF representatives tracking membership and recruiting new followers in every town in Darfur. He also emphasized that the URFF is also attempting to recruit relocated Darfur Arabs in Kordofan, Khartoum, and throughout Sudan. He stated that the recent creation of URFF's website (www.www.sudaneseurff.com) will amplify URFF's voice and attract new members. (NOTE: URFF's website appeared functional on May 4, with sections for news, statements, and a members forum. END NOTE). Following the meeting, Abaker also sent a 40 page URFF manifesto in Arabic to poloff that will be transmitted to AF/SPG.

BUT NO FOOD, MONEY, OR REAL POWER

15. (C) According to Abaker, despite their large membership and a developing communications strategy, URF and the URFF are both weak. He said that both groups lack resources, suffer from in-fighting with other rebel groups, and remain isolated from potential supporters outside of Sudan. He said that the URF needs support ("especially food and military resources") and advice about how to become a more influential rebel group.

URFF'S RELATIONSHIP WITH SPLM, URF, AND UNAMID

16. (C) The URFF representatives stated that they support the SPLM's vision of a new Sudan, though they insisted that the census and elections should only take place after there is a political solution to the conflict in Darfur. They stated that many rebel groups, including some within their umbrella URF organization, are fixated on rivalries. They

KHARTOUM 00000692 002.2 OF 002

also complained that URF Chairman Bahar Idriss Abu Gharda, a Zaghawa who was formerly the secretary general of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), seeks to dominate the URF and that the Zaghawa continue to dominate leadership positions in rebel movements, despite constituting a tiny minority of Darfur's population. Nonetheless, the URFF representatives said that their faction does share many concerns with the umbrella URF, including the importance of giving marginalized Arabs a voice, and the need for Arabs--not just Africans--to receive compensation as part of an eventual peace deal. The URFF representatives stated that the last time they met with UN/AU representatives was before Sirte, and that they were not aware of the UN/AU mediations upcoming plans.

COMMENT

17. (C) The URFF leaders appeared unsophisticated, isolated, and desperate for support. Their influence within the URF, even by the URFF members' own accounts, is limited. Their political aims do, however, seem more sincere than those of other former "Janjaweed" leaders such as the powerful warlord Mohammed Hamdan (aka Hamati), who have intermittently joined forces with African rebel movements only in order to gain lucrative concessions from Khartoum down the road. In addition, the URFF's website, manifesto, and overall communications strategy appeared impressive and signal that other groups are following JEM's pioneering use of the Internet to argue their case. It is certainly true that the loyalty of Darfur's Arab tribes is up for grabs and that Khartoum is able to hold them in check only through generous - if intermittent - payoffs. The day someone is able to "outbid" the NCP in the competition for these unruly and fractious tribes is the day Khartoum totally loses its tenuous control in Darfur. End comment.

18. (C) These URFF Leaders are available for recontact:  
Al-Bushari Musa Abaker (from the Iriaqat tribe /Head of URFF Internal Offices) - 0922791955  
Al-Siddig Al-Sayed Hemat (Beni Halba Tribe) - 0912378088

Asma Mohammed Jumaa - (Zayadia Tribe /Head of Omdurman Office  
and URFF Women's Movement) 0912656959  
FERNANDEZ